

who has worked very hard to make sure that finance issues were resolved and that he was comfortable with it. He and GRASSLEY were able to give it committee clearance to come to the floor with their support on these terms.

I also want to thank Senator LEE—MIKE LEE—for his forbearance. He has been interested in this bill in the past. We debated it on the Senate floor, and he has allowed it to proceed in this way also, so I am grateful to Senator LEE.

Of course, that is all the gratitude here within the body for people who made the bill possible, but the people we really need to be grateful to and appreciative of are the ALS advocates who come to us to argue for support and for encouragement. They are filled with hope even though there is no cure. They continue to seek investment in the science to try to figure out a way to a cure. They show immense courage.

This is a devastating, uniquely bad diagnosis for somebody to get. It is very hard for the individual who receives the diagnosis and also terrible for their family as well.

We have all had the experience in this body of seeing our constituents come to advocate on ALS and have the experience of seeing them the first time they come to us with a cane. When they come back the next year, they come back with a wheelchair and, the following year after that, come back with an electronic support mechanism with ventilator assistance and are still able to steer around, but it is an apparatus much more complex than a wheelchair. Then, in the next visit, it is their widow who comes alone.

We have had the chance to do something good here. It made no sense to require people who have this diagnosis wait 5 months before they can begin to get Social Security Disability Insurance benefits. Actually, very often, that first 5 months is when the support makes the most difference in terms of the quality of life that remains during the course of the illness.

We have been at this about 5 years now. Today is a good day in that sense.

I want to call to mind, just as an example of how this strikes at home—our small, local, home State paper, the Providence Journal, has a long tradition of being a very distinguished newspaper. Very often people who worked for it went on to the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and big and famous newspapers and made national names for themselves. The Providence Journal is a really significant newspaper. Just in the course of my time in politics, two of its writers have been stricken with ALS—struck down, in fact, with ALS: Brian Dickinson, first, and Bill Malinowski afterward. Each had to learn to write in very unusual ways, including with their eyeballs by blinking as letters went by on a screen or by directing a laser.

It is a terrible disease, ALS. But one thing that it does is it displays the ex-

traordinary human character of people who fight on through this increasingly disabling condition. The courage that they show and the way that they persist—in this case, to keep writing—Brian Dickinson was writing columns really until the end of his life—stand as an example to all of us of what courage in impossible circumstances looks like. That is a blessing they give to all of us.

With many thanks and much appreciation to J.R. Pagliarini, the president of Rhode Island ALS society, and his president emeritus, Kenneth McGunagle, and to their executive director, Beth Flanagan, I am happy to get this done.

Now we hope that in the final days of this Congress, our friends over in the House—with 300-plus cosponsors on the bill in the House—ought to be able to get out of each other's way and get this done before this Congress concludes.

I yield the floor to my friend and colleague Senator BRAUN with great appreciation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, today I rise in proud support of legislation that will break down barriers for those with medically determined ALS.

ALS is a progressive and fatal neurodegenerative disease that affects the motor nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, gradually robbing patients of the ability to eat, speak, and eventually breathe.

Currently, there are no meaningful treatments, no known cause, and no cure. But today, we have reason to hope.

Since 2016, Senators WHITEHOUSE and COTTON have championed the ALS Disability Insurance Access Act. Thanks to their tireless efforts, we are about to give ALS patients and their families more timely access to their Social Security disability benefits. No longer will these patients have to wait 5 months to access benefits they have earned.

Passing this act will help alleviate some of the financial burdens that accompany an ALS diagnosis and will allow patients and their families to focus their precious time where it needs to be—on their loved ones and their battle against the disease.

ALS is not a rare disease. More than 5,600 individuals in the United States are diagnosed each year, meaning 15 Americans are diagnosed each day. Not only is ALS common, it is also extremely personal to many in this Chamber, and it is personal to me.

My cousin Anne Seitz lost her battle with ALS on Thanksgiving Day 10 years ago. Her husband Terry Seitz currently resides in my hometown and is my State director of outreach.

My budget and appropriations staffer, Robert Ordway, and his sister Jennifer lost their father, Douglas Raymond Ordway, to the disease.

Kathy Laesch, a member of my Indianapolis team, has a son Brian who was diagnosed with ALS this summer.

Brian, who also lost his father, has fortunately been enrolled in a clinical trial. We are all praying for his treatments to be effective. In the network of people I have come to know back home and here in the Senate, it shows you just how many lives are affected by it, and there are countless patients it has affected in the Hoosier State.

I would like to personally thank Tina Kaetzel, the executive director of the Indiana ALS Association, for bringing this bill to the attention of our office.

I would also like to give a heartfelt thank you to Corey Polen, of Brownsburg, IN, for his passionate and unwavering advocacy in support of the bill. Corey has become a friend to our office and has also been a champion of legislation I introduced, the Promising Pathway Act, which would provide new FDA authority to more rapidly approve drugs specifically for diseases like this.

I would be remiss if I did not thank I AM ALS, especially Brian Wallach, Danielle Carnival, and Dan Tate, for their unyielding devotion to this and to fixing our broken healthcare system.

Today, we come one step closer to accomplishing this pursuit. It has been a great honor to cofound the first-ever Senate ALS Caucus with my colleague across the aisle, Senator CHRIS COONS, of Delaware. The passage of the ALS Disability Insurance Access Act has been a priority for this caucus since its inception about a year ago. We readily acknowledge that the bill's passage is long overdue and that there is much more work to be done. We look forward to rolling up our sleeves and coming together to advance policies in the future that will continue to improve the quality of life for ALS patients.

In doing so, we celebrate ALS patients—those we have lost, those who are currently fighting this dreadful disease, and those whose journeys have not yet begun. It is a disease that does not have the luxury of a large community from which to raise awareness and fight for reforms. ALS has no survivor community. It is up to us, then, to speak up for those who can no longer speak and to stand up for those who can no longer stand.

To those whom we have lost to ALS and to those currently battling this disease—Anne Seitz, Douglas Raymond Ordway, Brian Laesch, Corey Polen, Brian Wallach, Dan Tate, and so many others impacted by ALS—we here in the U.S. Senate are your advocates.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, today is my 276th climate speech, and my increasingly battered graphic is showing its wear, but for the first time in a really, really long time, there is real hope for climate action in America.

The light of science will shine in a Biden administration. Our U.S. Government will heed actual data. Agencies will act on facts. The White House

will care about the harm carbon pollution does right now across the country. President Biden will restore the EPA to its role of safeguarding our air and water and will task the State Department to surge climate policy abroad. Every Department—from Transportation to the USDA, to HUD, to the SEC—will have a role in turning this ship around before catastrophe.

At last, the Biden administration will cleanse America's government of its grimy infestation of polluter lackeys, stooges, and hangers-on and will shut off the disastrous handouts to fossil fuel industry donors. A flood of cleansing executive actions will wash away the grime. The American Presidency, with its great power, will shake free of the polluters' grip, but the Presidency alone cannot spare us.

Congress must pass a comprehensive climate bill, stop rewarding polluters from polluting, and clean up our energy market so it is not corrupted by or for the fossil fuel industry—for instance, putting a real price on carbon to pay for the fossil fuel damage. We have to invest in new, green infrastructure to create millions of jobs. We need to prepare communities along our coasts for rising seas, others for higher temperatures, and other climate dangers. We need to address the dangerous systemic financial risks fossil fuel presents to our economic system. There is work to be done, and it is overdue.

So what has been stopping us?

Four years ago, Senate Democrats came to the Senate floor and here exposed this web of denial and obstruction that had been built by the fossil fuel industry to prevent meaningful action on climate change. This evil web is a front for billionaire polluters like the Kochs and fossil fuel pushers like ExxonMobil and Marathon Petroleum. To hide its funders, this web uses creepy identity-scrubbing groups like Donors Trust and Donors Capital. They move money and people around in the web in a Whac-A-Mole array of disposable groups with misleadingly wholesome names like the Heartland Institute and the Franklin Center for Government and Public Integrity. Benjamin Franklin would vomit at this abuse of his name.

Following Big Tobacco's playbook, this web of denial kept the polluters' fingerprints off the dirty work of sowing doubt about climate science, just as the tobacco industry fraudulently stood up front groups to dispense denial of the harms of tobacco. This polluter web of denial also kept the Republican Party in line by spending stunning amounts of money in American politics.

Dr. Robert Brulle, now at Brown University, created this graphic off of his research, and it gives you a sense of how big and how complex this web of denial is that the fossil fuel industry stood up, and it is funded by huge amounts of dark money by anonymous funders.

When we exposed this web back in 2016, fossil fuel giants like ExxonMobil

said it was out of the climate denial and obstruction business. Exxon claimed it had not funded the Heartland Institutes of the world for a decade. Fossil fuel executives said they knew climate change was a threat, and they claimed to have turned the page on this nonsense.

Well, that just ain't so. The network of phony front groups, identity-laundering outfits, and bogus PR campaigns is alive and well. Like any threatened crooked enterprise, it morphs to hide in its surroundings, but we just caught another glimpse of it through a New York Times expose of the corporate PR firm FTI Consulting. FTI started 40 years ago as a hired gun for parties in litigation and now offers virtually any nasty service a corporation could need. According to the Times, the fossil fuel industry employs FTI for a lot of dirty work.

One thing FTI does is to stand up fake front groups. The New York Times chronicles how organizations like Citizens to Protect PA Jobs, New Mexicans for Economic Prosperity, and the Liberty Energy Project actually all trace back to FTI through common employees, internet domain registrations, and other ties. Each of these pop-up groups suggests that it is a broad coalition of regular Americans. Each sports a flashy website, like this one, with neighborly looking folk in scenic vistas, and, of course, they all make the fossil fuel case for cutting corporate taxes and slashing environmental protections. We call these fake environmental grassroots groups "Astroturf"—a product manufactured by big, powerful special interests to look like grassroots support.

This one is a classic—Texans for Natural Gas. The Times writes about this outfit:

Acting as Texans for Natural Gas representatives, FTI employees have launched pro-industry petitions, produced videos and reports on the importance of the Permian Basin oil field, and written opinion pieces for local newspapers supporting fossil fuels. The site features testimonials from three women—

I am quoting still—

two of whom are represented with stock photos—

Let me interrupt the quote for a minute because you know you can go to the internet and find stock photos of people you can use. So these aren't real testimonials. These are fake FTI testimonials with stock photos to make it look like it is credible. OK, I will go back to the quote:

and one with a photo used without permission from the Flickr page of a photographer in the Philippines.

Classy, huh? This bag of polluter tricks is pretty familiar to those who have studied the web of denial here, but FTI is also pulling some new tricks.

One new target is fossil fuel's own investors. A new challenge for oil and gas companies is their own shareholders—even their biggest institutional inves-

tors—calling on them to identify and address climate risks. For instance, last spring, BlackRock, the largest institutional investor in the world, voted at a shareholder meeting to remove two Exxon directors and install an independent Exxon chairman, all to improve this oil giant's "insufficient progress" in addressing its business risk from climate change. That kind of warning shot sends shivers down the spine of a big polluter.

So there is FTI, which popped up a group in 2018 called Main Street Investors, which commissioned studies arguing that activist shareholders harm shareholder value, and it launched a website, divestmentfacts.com, to argue against big university endowments, pension funds, and other big investors divesting from fossil fuels. The Times notes about this scheme: "At least six academic papers published on this website were by professors who, in addition to their university jobs, were also working for Compass Lexecon, [an] FTI subsidiary."

Neat trick using shareholder money to fool shareholders.

Who paid FTI to set up Main Street Investors? The National Association of Manufacturers, which the watchdog group Influence Map has called the worst climate obstructor in America. So it is no surprise that they are paying for this phony nonsense. The question is, Who paid the National Association of Manufacturers to set this up? They won't say. So we have to take a guess.

There is more that FTI is up to. Don't like your news coverage? FTI can build you your own news site. The Times found FTI lurking behind Energy In Depth and Western Wire—two sites that churn out pro-fossil fuel articles and spread them around the internet. With mass extinction of real local newspapers underway, FTI is busy setting up polluter news pages to fill the void. It is clever, if repulsive.

Of course, FTI does dirty work on social media. After New York City filed a climate lawsuit against Exxon, FTI launched a social media attack on New York Mayor Bill de Blasio. In a pantomime twofer, FTI used content from its phony Energy In Depth news site in its paid-for social media attack. Who paid? They won't say. Take a guess.

Another FTI campaign bought social media ads to steer people to another FTI front group, the Arctic Energy Center, which promotes—guess what—drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and off the Alaskan coast.

In yet another campaign, FTI's shadowy special strategic communications unit set up a phony Facebook profile to secretly track environmental protesters. It did this for Apache Energy, which wanted to drill for fossil fuel next to a State park in Texas. See the pattern?

But wait. It gets even creepier than this, if you can believe it. FTI has a menu that it offers to its clients of fake personas.

These fake personas use fake social media and message board accounts to interfere in internet debate—say by harassing local citizens who are concerned about pollution and who may be criticizing FTT's clients, so they will bomb into the internet debate around that, offering fake personas as the phony voice to disrupt that debate.

This is actually their menu. You have what they call "the Deraileur." "The Deraileur seizes on a seemingly innocuous section of the otherwise negative narrative and attempts to pull the comment thread into a discursive discussion around that detailed non-issue."

They offer next the "Drunken Conspiracy Theorist Uncle." "The Drunken Conspiracy Theorist Uncle agrees with the negative commenter but conflates other unrelated and offensive issues into it, lumping it all together into an unpalatable whole."

They also offer the "Semantic Nitpicker," who "asks an endless series of questions seeking clarification or pointing out minor flaws in the way the argument is constructed. This can be played both friendly and oppositionally, but by different stacks of kids."

On it goes through the "Skeptical Capitalist," the "Patronizing Voice of Reason," the "Confused Time Traveler," the "Concerned Hipster," and believe it or not, here is a real beauty—the "Dog Typing on a Keyboard." You can pay FTT to send somebody real behind a fake persona to go interfere anonymously in somebody else's conversation—in this case, claiming a dog typing on a keyboard. "The dog typing on a keyboard chimes in with very poor grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and posts frequently to clutter up the thread and make it very hard to read"—basically packing the debate with so much nonsense that everybody has to tune out.

These are actually services offered to the fossil fuel industry clients that they pay for. They pay to disrupt legitimate internet debate using phony, paid-for personas that come in occupying these characteristics, I guess you would call them. It is unbelievably disgusting behavior for any corporation to engage in, which is probably why they hide the money.

You may ask, why? Why on Earth would fossil fuel companies spend big money on all this fancy, fake activity—from phony Astroturf groups to fake attack campaigns, to the dog typing on the keyboard? Why would the fossil fuel industry go through all these complex, phony schemes? Won't they ultimately get caught?

Well, the answer is simple, and it is a number—\$650 billion. Six hundred and fifty billion dollars is the subsidy for fossil fuel in the United States of America every year. Every year, \$650 billion. Another year, another \$650 billion, according to the International Monetary Fund, which is kind of a technical bean counter organization

that is not an environmental group by any stretch.

So let's say you are getting that \$650 billion subsidy every year. Even if all this fakery ends up exposed, if in the meantime you have disrupted the opposition and kept your business scheme going, you have reaped another year of multi-hundred-billion-dollar subsidies.

I mention in this web of denial the identity-laundering group called Donors Trust, and I will come back to them right now because I have called them out over and over.

Donors Trust just put a letter to the editor into my home State newspaper to assure its readers that Donors Trust is just as pure as the driven snow. Of all the newspapers in the world, Donors Trust just happened to pick mine. I appreciate the attention. But let's get the facts straight because here is Donors Trust, right in the middle of the web of denial. It has been called "the dark-money ATM of the right," behind "the right's assault on labor unions, climate scientists, public schools, [and] economic regulations." It has been called "the Right's favorite dark-money conduit, [which] allows the identities of wealthy conservative donors to stay hidden." It has been called "Donors Trust, the Right-Wing Secret Money Machine." And it is smack in the middle of this dirty, dark fossil fuel web that has propagated and funded the lie—the lie of climate denial.

From FTT and all of its schemes and its typing dogs to Donors Trust, the sleaze and the scale of the fossil fuel scheming is itself a signal of the mischief afoot. You don't put up a phony-balance operation of this magnitude unless you have some real nasty stuff that you are trying to defend and mislead people about. Well, for \$650 billion a year, you can crank up a lot of sleazy mischief.

Here in Congress, we can't keep dancing to the tune of this crowd. We still don't know which party will control this Chamber next year, but we do know that the Senate is out of excuses on climate change. It is time for a strong climate bill that can be signed into law by a new President, swept into office with the most votes in history on a strong commitment to climate action.

It is on us. It is on us whether this web of denial will hold us back or whether we will break free at last of its corrupting influence and do, for once—for once—our duty instead of its bidding.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

MR. BROWN. Mr. President, I always appreciate the persistence and integrity and intellectual vigor of Senator WHITEHOUSE's comments on the floor talking about climate and talking about the corruption of big money and climate politics and climate decision making.

So to Senator WHITEHOUSE, thank you.

REMEMBERING LARRY WILLIS

Mr. President, this weekend we lost a great champion for American workers—Larry Willis, president of the Transportation Trades Department at the AFL-CIO.

Larry dedicated his life to the labor movement, fighting for workers on the frontlines of our transportation system. He worked to empower busdrivers and ramp workers, flight attendants and train operators around the country so they could fight for better wages and protections on the job and they could build a middle-class life for their families.

We know the labor movement is the single biggest reason that we have a middle class in this country. We know that the decline of the labor union movement is the reason that the middle class is shrinking in this country.

All of what Larry did said a lot about his character—that he took on that job and spent his whole career fighting to give power to the workers who have so often been denied a voice in this country.

Everyone who worked with him attests to his skill, his compassion, his commitment to justice, and his love of life. One of his greatest strengths was his ability to find compromise in even the most difficult, thorniest issues in front of us.

Make no mistake, Larry was always a fierce fighter for transportation workers. He never compromised when defending worker safety. He always challenged us to make legislation better, but he also understood that meaningful change sometimes comes in smaller steps, not in great bounds. He was willing to work for months, even years, behind the scenes to make real progress for transportation workers. Washington needs more advocates like Larry—someone who believes deeply in the cause and backs it up with relentless work to find a solution.

I want to talk about his grace. He was very direct. He didn't hold back when Congress did something that was not in the best interests of workers, but he never closed the door on anyone, even his adversaries. Larry was always willing to pick back up a conversation to find a path forward. He did not let egos get in the way of progress—something that happens far too often in this town. He never let disputes make him jaded. He always kept his head up and his door open.

My staff and I relied on Larry's guidance and wisdom for many years. He knew every angle of our Nation's transportation system. He used that knowledge to help millions of transportation workers. He was a wonderful person. We loved working with him.

We are deeply saddened by his passing. We are keeping his wife Amy and daughter Samantha—oh, how he loved both of them and lit up when talking about them—we are keeping them in our thoughts and prayers as they cope with this sudden, heartbreaking loss.

We will honor Larry Willis the best way we can—by continuing to fight to